

## The Three Women of the Christmas Story

As we are busily making last minute preparations for Christmas this week, may the Lord help us to take the time to stop and truly reflect on the sending of His wonderful Son to earth. As we read about the incredible “Christmas story”, we find that God used ordinary people to bring about His wondrous plan. Each of these people were normal individuals. What set them apart was their love for God and their desire to please Him. Three of these individuals were women. We can learn something from these women’s examples and how they were willing to be used by God. Just for a moment, let’s take a look at the lives of Elizabeth, Mary, and Anna, the three women of the Christmas story.

The first one mentioned in Luke’s account is Elizabeth along with her husband Zacharias (Luke 1). They were chosen by God to be the parents of John the Baptist, who would be the forerunner of Jesus Christ. Although she was older, we do not see her question God or even worry about whether or not her body would be able to handle the demands of childbirth. In fact, everytime we see Elizabeth she is rejoicing! She rejoices in Luke 1:25 because the Lord had seen fit to take away her reproach among men. In the same chapter in verses 42-45, she rejoices that her own cousin Mary had been chosen to bring the Messiah into the world. Finally, we see her rejoicing in verse 58 over the birth of her firstborn son John. It seems that Elizabeth’s prominent characteristic is her joy. She was joyful no matter the situation, and it was with this God-given joy that she was able to encourage Mary in the most crucial time of her life. Through Elizabeth, God confirmed His calling upon Mary’s life and assured her that He was going to reward her faith in Him (vs. 45). We can learn from Elizabeth’s life to be joyful in every situation, because our joy is based on our God!

Then of course the woman we probably think most about when referring to the Christmas story is Mary, the mother of Jesus. She is perhaps the most highly esteemed woman in the Bible because of how God used her life. Ironically, however, she was the very opposite of the so-called highly esteemed woman in today’s society. Women in the day and age in which we live are encouraged to step on whoever they have to in order to get to the top. The thought of submission to a man or even being under a man’s leadership is absolutely repulsive to them. They are to follow their heart no matter what boundaries they have to break in order to do that. As Christian women, we cannot agree to this erroneous way of thinking because it is unbiblical in every way. In Mary’s life, her biggest quality was submission. When the angel appeared to her in Luke 1:26-38, she had already submitted to her parents’ authority in being betrothed to Joseph. As God’s plan for her was revealed by the angel, even though it was hard for

her to see how this plan would be carried out, she surrendered herself to His will. Perhaps what made Mary such a wonderful, godly woman was that she said “yes” to everything God asked her to do, and she found that He gave grace for her to do it. May that be true of us. May we be always willing to do what the Lord asks of us with a submissive spirit!

Lastly, we see more of a minor character mentioned toward the end of the account of Christ’s birth. Although there are only a few verses about this woman, she is not to be overlooked. When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to be presented to the Lord, it was Anna the prophetess who was one of the people who played a role in helping to announce the arrival of the long awaited Messiah to the people at the temple (Luke 1:36-38). Something that sticks out the most about Anna is that she was right where God wanted her to be when he wanted her to be there. In verses 36-37, we see her testimony. At a very young age, she was met with tragedy. She had to bury her husband after only being married to him for 7 years. We see her response, however, was faithful service to God. She dedicated herself to serving God in the temple for the rest of her life. It was because of that crucial decision years ago that she was in the right place at the right time when the Son of God visited the temple that day. If she had become bitter and decided not to serve God, she would have missed this miraculous appointment with the Savior of the world. God was rewarding her for her faithfulness. The Bible tells us in verse 38, that she came “in that instant” and gave thanks unto the Lord! No doubt God used her to confirm what He was doing in the hearts of Mary and Joseph and to help strengthen their faith. May we be faithful to God like Anna was so that we can be used by God and experience His blessings by being where we should be when He wants us to be there.

If these three ladies were alive today, what would they say? How would they challenge us to be all that we can be for Christ? Although we do not have that privilege, we can benefit from their examples in the Word of God. May God help us to be joyful, submissive, and faithful servants of God in this upcoming new year! May God bless you! May you all have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!